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LETTER DATED 28 DECEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On Wednesday, 23 December 1998, Hizbullah, an Iranian-backed terrorist organization based in Lebanon, launched a massive rocket attack against civilian towns and villages in northern Israel. The areas of both the western Galilee and the upper Galilee, as well as the city of Kiryat Shemona, were affected, resulting in the injury of 16 Israeli civilians, including children. At least 250 buildings were damaged. The human toll would have been considerably more substantial had thousands of civilians not sat in bomb shelters for 24 hours. Israel holds the Government of Lebanon directly responsible for this terrorist attack, which was perpetrated from its territory.

Hizbullah has repeatedly declared that it would continue to direct attacks against Israeli civilian targets. At the time of last week's rocket attack, Mohammed Ra'ad, the chairman of the Political Council of Hizbullah, stated on Radio Al-Nur: "I see nothing in the response of the Islamic resistance that should arouse any comment, or would be worthy of condemnation. In no way should there be a condemnation for the firing of rockets at settlements by the Islamic resistance ...".

Israel has expressed its regret for the loss of civilian life which occurred in the course of an air raid against terrorist targets in Lebanon on 22 December. It should be noted, however, that while the loss of Lebanese civilian life was accidental, as the Government of Israel has already explained, the attack on Israeli civilians was, by contrast, premeditated and deliberate, calculated for a time when children go to school. This attack constitutes an unquestionable violation of the 1996 understandings reached under the auspices of the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Israel has repeatedly stated its willingness to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978 in its entirety. The Council in that resolution called not only for the withdrawal of Israeli forces, but also for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the Lebanese Government's effective authority in the area. The last two provisions of the resolution are not compatible with the continued presence and activities of terrorist organizations in southern Lebanon. Israel reiterates

again its willingness to implement Council resolution 425 (1978) and calls upon the Government of Lebanon to cooperate with Israel in order to restore peace and security along our common border.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dore GOLD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative